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Ingersoll - Julian . 1831.

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FROM

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JULIAN:

A TRAGEDY.

IN FIVE ACTS.

PHILADELPHIA:

CAREY & LEA.

1831.

Ingersoll, Charles, Jared

DL 1934.1.7

PRINTED BY LYDIA R. BAILEY.

PREFACE.

DURING the wars waged by the Western Roman Empire against Persia, the Emperor Valerian, after being defeated by Sapor, King of Persia, was taken prisoner, by perfidious means, and treated with refined cruelty :—made to serve as the King's footstool, exposed to popular outrage, kept in captivity till his death, flayed alive, and salted, so as to expire in excruciating torments; his skin then tanned, painted, and nailed to a palace wall.

Julian the apostate, some time afterwards, undertook his celebrated expedition against Persia ; having with him, as commander of the Roman cavalry, Hormisdas, a Persian prince, who had deserted his country, and been promoted by Constantine, the uncle of Julian. An attempt, by Persian spies, on the fidelity of Hormisdas, failed : but Julian abandoned the siege of Ctesiphon, the Persian capital, burned his large fleet, and marched his army to the interior, where they were continually harassed and reduced, though always victorious, till the Emperor himself was mortally wounded by an arrow. Apprized that speedy dissolution would ensue, he drew the arrow from his side, and expired in the arms of victory, philosophizing on death and fame. The army immediately proffered the Roman Empire to Sallust, a duke and præfect of Gaul, and an eminent member of the Christian sect, then establishing itself throughout the Roman possessions—who at once declined it ; whereupon the soldiers proclaimed Jovian Emperor. He commanded the imperial guard, and was

a dissolute soldier, whose only service consisted in leading the remnant of the army home ; where he soon died, and was succeeded as Emperor by Valentine, commander of the Targeteers in Julian's army.

To these historical characters and events, the fictitious additions of Zopyrus, Esther, Sophia, Ishmael, Thersites, and Cheops, have been made, for the composition of a dramatic poem, by a very young essayist ; who, discarding lovers and villains, attempted to develop ambition, patriotism, pride, remorse, and selfishness, as the ruling passions, from whose indulgence to excess a moral always results in retributive justice. History, teaching by examples, affords a sufficient lesson in the contrast of Julian's pagan virtues with the Christian merits of Sallust.

The name and character of Zopyrus are assumed from the prince whose adventures at the siege of Babylon are narrated in the 143d—149th chapters of the third book of Herodotus, who mutilated himself by cutting off his nose and ears, clipping his hair, and scourging his body ; and thus disfigured, feigned to desert from Darius's army to the Babylonians. Having gained their confidence, by a system of perfidy, he was promoted to the command of their army, and betrayed the city to the Persians.

Instead of introducing supernatural beings, Ishmael and Cheops are intended to represent the Arabian and the African characters as really existing in the sorcerers and astrologers of those nations.

Ishmael, the dwarf, is an Arab of the desert, as this unalterable race was found lately by Volney ; smaller, leaner, and darker, than the other Bedouins, with legs without calves, and bellies shrunk to their backs, not more than five feet high, living to a great age, on the smallest quantity of the poorest food. Cheops, on the

contrary, is a robust and imposing negro, in the fantastic dress of Egyptian astrologers.

The doctrine of the general resurrection, and a future state of rewards and punishments, existed among the Arabs from time immemorial ; whose temperance, learning, longevity, and permanence of character, imparted to them appearances of superhuman knowledge and power.

The Persians, says Herodotus, have neither statues, temples, nor altars ; the use of which they censure as impious, not believing that the gods partake of our human nature. Their custom is to offer, on the summits of the highest mountains, sacrifices to the expanse of the firmament. They also adore the sun, the moon, the earth, fire, water, and the winds. In all their prayers, their sovereign and nation must be comprehended. Their sacrifices are always attended by magicians. They are profuse drinkers of wine, excellent horsemen and archers, profound admirers of martial courage, and abominators of falsehood.

The scene is laid among the delightful natural beauties and the magnificent structures and artificial embellishments of the Persian metropolis, when it was the admiration of the world.

The costumes of the Persians, as described by Xenophon and Herodotus, were, like their climate and dwellings, splendid with ornaments ; painted faces, false hair, necklaces, rings, bracelets, and girdles, being worn with their tiaras, tunics, and trowsers ; at least vying with, if not eclipsing, the graceful and elegant equipments of Roman warriors.

Herodotus gives the following minute account of a Babylonian gentleman's dress : Two vests, one of linen, which falls to the feet, another over this made of wool—a white sash connecting the whole. The fashion of

their shoes peculiar, but resembling those of the Thebans. They wear their hair long, covered with a turban, and are lavish in the use of perfumes. Each person has a seal ring and walking cane, the head of which is carved like an apple, a rose, a lily, an eagle, or some other figure—for it is unlawful to have a cane without a device.

CHARACTERS.

JULIAN.

HORMISDAS.

ZOPYRUS.

SALLUST.

JOVIAN.

VALENTINE.

THERSITES.

CHEOPS.

ISHMAEL.

VALERIAN.

ESTHER.

SOPHIA.

JULIAN.



ACT I.

SCENE—*The walls and towers of Ctesiphon at a distance, beyond the river Tigris. The Roman fleet at anchor in the stream. Flourish of martial instruments. Enter, with eagles, standards, &c. as from pursuit, JULIAN, SALLUST, VALENTINE, and the Roman army.*

JULIAN.

PLANT Rome's victorious standards on these plains,
Another conquest of the Roman arms.
Here, comrades, to your tents, while sultry noon
From summer disk enervates, seek repose—
Unbrace and bask in martial recreation.
Sweet is the soldier's pastime after victory,
And soft the laurel's shade upon his rest :
Grateful the change from rocky Araby
To these luxuriant and teeming environs.
Now to the guardian deities of glory
Let altars stream with copious libations.
Rome's eagle next shall quarry upon Ctesiphon,
Yonder voluptuous and recreant capital,
The end and recompense of our campaign.

SOLDIERS.

Long live the Emperor ! Julian, the invincible,
The bravest of the brave ! Long live the Emperor.

B

JULIAN.

The music of your cordial cheers bestow
Not on me, comrades, but on Prince Hormisdas,
The hero of the victory of Ctesiphon.

SOLDIERS.

Long live the Master of the Horse, hora.

JULIAN.

With courage worthy Rome's most strenuous age,
And local knowledge he alone enjoys,
Among these regions of his early life
He was our pioneer to victory.
Like time his squadrons mowed the Persian ranks,
We but the hours, panting to overtake him.

SOLDIERS.

Long live the Persian Roman Prince Hormisdas!

SALLUST (*aside*).

Unhappy loyalist, whom honour binds
In galling chains to Rome's vainglorious car
Driving in triumph o'er his native soil.

JULIAN.

Prepare the sacrifice, invoke the auspices.

(The tripod and victims, fire, &c. prepared for sacrifice, performed by aruspices in the back ground, attended by JULIAN and part of the soldiery. SALLUST, VALENTINE, and the rest stand apart.)

*Enter THERSITES, conducting ZOPYRUS, SOPHIA, and
ISHMAEL, as prisoners.*

THERSITES.

This way, ye spoils of war, follow your captor.

ZOPYRUS.

Whither would'st lead us?

THERSITES.

What is that to thee?

Insolent questionmonger, hold thy peace ;
Mine is the right to kill and eat you too :
If ye are spared, thank Heaven for the boon
Bestowed upon you by the generous Greek,
A Grecian Roman, Rome's preceptor, sirrah,
Whose property you are as prisoners,
My slaves, my booty, cattle, furniture——

ZOPYRUS.

A Greek !—Are we then captives to a Greek ?
A Greek ! the pimp and purveyor of Rome,
The whetstone of her sanguinary sword——

THERSITES.

Who dares inveigh against his conqueror ?

ZOPYRUS.

Audacious caitiff !

ISHMAEL.

Nay, my lord, forbear ;
Remember, son of Persia, and beware.

THERSITES.

Whose power extends to punish and to pardon ?

ZOPYRUS.

Can'st thou not bring us to the Prince Hormisdas ?

THERSITES.

Did I not tell thee, No, impatient prize,
As hot and hasty as your torrid zone ?
The Prince is absent, ravaging these purlieus,
Earning his welcome home in Persian blood.

ZOPYRUS.

Is he so rabid, that he ransacks thus
The very birthplace of his Persian being ?

THERSITES.

The prince is a deserter, now on proof :
Let him take care to vouch his loyalty,
Or we will brand him traitor.

ZOPYRUS.

Traitor !

THERSITES.

Traitor.

ZOPYRUS (*aside*).

A traitor ! fountain of my life, what are ye ?
His prostrate, palpitating country—No,
He sympathizes not with her.

THERSITES.

Not he ;

He hates her with a renegado's malice.

ZOPYRUS.

Home, faith, allegiance, sympathies which hold
This world of various nations in their spheres,
Which distance severs not nor time impairs,
The natural omnipotence of birthplace,
That conquers climes and tempers latitudes,—
Is he alone insensible to all ?

THERSITES.

They influence him to aggravate the hate
He bears to all that he was born to love,
To grind his scimitar to keener edge
To cleave his country to the earth withal.

But, see ! the Emperor, and at his orisons :
For ever fighting, writing, slaying, praying,
The pride of soldiers, sciolists, and alchymists,
The flower of Rome and blight of Christendom.

ZOPYRUS.

So mean of person and of garb !

THERSITES.

E'en so.

ZOPYRUS.

When will the thirst of fame that maddens him
Be quenched or slaked ? When will he cry enough ?

THERSITES.

Of stature ignoble, careless of mien,
But in ambition and in deed gigantic,
Despising the delights of bed and board,
He scarcely eats, or drinks, or sleeps, or loves,
But roams the world in steel and science clad,
Seeking the earth's four corners to subdue.
For my part I am weary of the chase ;
Battles all day and ambuscades at night,
Famine, distemper, sudden death, no burial,
Constant attendants of this warspite life.
Would I were safe at home. But see, what now ?

AUGUR.

Sheathe the sword and cast the quiver,
Instead take up the Tigris river,
With that on your back, the city attack,
Else beware how you dare, there is death in the air.

(On this annunciation by the AUGUR of unfavourable omens, JULIAN hastily leaves the altar, and comes forward.)

JULIAN.

The gods are inauspicious—Frightful omens
Menacing speedy death—stern destiny !
With thirty summers of imperfect deeds
Just in the bloom of glory to be gathered :
Immortal passion, thirst divine of fame,
To whom my brief career has been devoted,
Whether in learning's porch, in arms, or purple,
Yes, I have loved thee, and will woo thee still.
Pleasures can not seduce, nor terrors drive
Thy constant votary from thy granite shrine.
While I have life, I'll follow thee, RENOWN !
And, in the arms of death will cling to thee,
Life's greatest luxury, death's noblest crown.

(During JULIAN's soliloquy, THERSITES introduces

ZOPYRUS, SOPHIA, and ISHMAEL, to SALLUST,
who presents them, at the close of it, to JULIAN.)

SALLUST.

Most gracious sovereign, as Count Jovian scoured
The precincts of the Persian capital,
These signal captives fell into his power.

THERSITES.

This is a female, sire, and rode a dromedary,
Led by this curious pigmy, her attendant,
As fleet and active as an antelope.
This one was mounted on a noble steed.
My master went to seek the Prince Hormisdas,
Whom they claim kindred with : My governance
Expires with this tradition of my charge,
As I was ordered, to your majesty.

JULIAN.

Enlarge them, and restore them to their country.

ZOPYRUS.

Tortures await us there. We are fugitives.

JULIAN.

And whither fleeing?

ZOPYRUS.

To your panoply :

Find we not refuge in your camp, dread Sire,
The wide world is without a shelter for us.

JULIAN.

By what vicissitude exposed to risk
The chances of a flight so perilous ?

ZOPYRUS.

Suffer a wretched outcast to inquire
Is not the Prince Hormisdas of your service ?

JULIAN.

The master of our horse. If not the first,
Second to none in Roman confidence.

ZOPYRUS.

Behold in us his son and daughter, Cæsar,
For his sake exiled, come to share his fate :
Myself, the heir presumptive of the throne,
And this, my hapless sister, orphaned
By our unhappy father's league with Rome.
In Oriental privacy recluse,
Her garden walks never transgressed till now,
Me all of mankind that Sophia knows,
I little questing in affairs of state—
We lived sequestered, till our lineage
Exposed us to traduction and disgrace.
Our crime is that we are Hormisdas' children ;
For which, condemned to tortures, we escaped
When flight or death was all the option left,
To cast ourselves on Roman clemency,
As erst our father did, when he withdrew
From wrongs at home to foreign vindication.
He fled before us, and has raised a name
—With nought to found it but a trusty sword—
Sole remnant of a princely appanage—
Grateful to Rome, and hateful to his country.
Give me with him to be revenged : I long
To brand my native land with malediction,
To raze its palaces, warray its provinces,
To lay it waste with havoc, fire, and sword,
Till bloodshot tears and sighs of servitude
Prevail where peace and plenty used to reign.
None, Sire, have felt our father's dire advent,
Like his discarded and devoted offspring ;
None like the son of such a parent burn
To emulate him in exploits of vengeance.

SALLUST.

Hark ! 'tis the Prince's trumpet—See, he comes.

Enter HORMISDAS and JOVIAN.

HORMISDAS.

My son ! my daughter ! Do I see my children,
And press you to my heart—

ZOPYRUS and SOPHIA.

Yes, dearest father.

HORMISDAS.

Shade of the sainted Esther ! condescend,
From blest abodes of peace and loveliness,
To look upon this meeting, and to bless
Our children, come to balm their father's heart,
Their father's broken heart, with filial love,
And fill it with unutterable joy.
Thou, too, old Ishmael, guardian of the third,
As of the first and second generation :
It glads thy grateful master, faithful friend,
And constant champion of our family,
To see thee with my children. Welcome all ;
You bring a recompense for every wrong.

JULIAN.

Give them disposal, Prince, in your pavilion ;
Nor let the animosities of war
Intrude upon affection's sanctuary.

HORMISDAS.

My bosom gushes forth with gratitude
To be thus blessed : a sudden stream outwells
From what, till now, was barren, arid rock.
Yes, mighty Cæsar, at whose high behest,
A Persian prince fidelity has vouched
In dreadful execution on his country,
This meeting overpays the sternest service.
[*Exeunt HORMISDAS, ZOPYRUS, SOPHIA, and ISHMAEL.*

JULIAN.

Once more unto the altar, and implore
The angry deities for better auspices.

*(JULIAN, followed by most of the soldiery, retires
again to the sacrifice, which is renewed.)*

SALLUST.

Apostate Julian !

JOVIAN.

Nay, intolerant !

SALLUST.

Thus, in the face of all his Christian troops,
Who gain his battles, while they loathe his wars,
Thus outrage them with impious idolatry.

JOVIAN.

Præfect, you wrong the Emperor.

SALLUST.

I do not.

VALENTINE.

I am amazed at such licentiousness.

SALLUST.

From chill morasses, where we camped last night,
Roused like the morning mists, who led the way,
Profuse of life, to storm yon fastnesses,
The lurid lightning all the guide we had,
Who were the first to mount the breach, I say ?

JOVIAN.

He whom you now disparage, reverend duke :
He was the first who led to victory,
Bareheaded, and on foot, as is his wont—
The Emperor led the column, sword in hand,
While crags of rock, and fiery missiles poured
In cataracts upon the desperate onset.

SALLUST.

But who ~~sustained~~ him ? 'T was the Christian troops ;
Silent and steadfast as the march of death,

C

Strewing their way with hecatombs of slain,
 Their valour conquered every obstacle ;
 And now their brave survivors are insulted
 By heathenish and impious superstition.

JOVIAN.

Does it become your age or station, duke,
 To sow dissension in the Roman camp
 —Discord, the worst of evils, worse than war—
 By idle and intractable disputes
 Of creeds and worship? What are they to men
 Whose calling is to die in arms, unblessed,
 Reckless of all but discipline and victory.

SALLUST.

The meanest soldier sees, and scorns to see,
 His Emperor tremble when the augurs frown ;
 Scoffs at his vigils with that black knave Cheops,
 Soliciting the stars for auspices.

JOVIAN.

In battle Julian is the God of war,
 For whom Prætorian guards delight to die :
 Soldiers adore him, chieftains emulate :
 Despising creeds, their faith is in his sword.

SALLUST.

The oldest in his service, I lament
 That one deplorable infirmity,
 Apostacy, the root of every wrong,
 Cankers our master's noble properties.

[*Exit.*]

VALENTINE.

The old duke always warms upon that theme.

JOVIAN.

He went with Constantine.

VALENTINE.

And did not you ?

JOVIAN.

Yes : but I proselyted back again
As a good subject should, when Julian came.

VALENTINE.

My present adoration is bestowed
On that enchanting princess.

JOVIAN.

Pshaw !

VALENTINE.

I swear

I am enamoured. Yes, I am in love.

JOVIAN.

Wait till you see her, till you hear her voice.

VALENTINE.

Love's poetry is spoiled by sight and voice ;
Its fires blaze brightest when by fancy fed.

JOVIAN.

But the Emperor—will he not punish you,
Who interdicts all love, but that of fame,
And treats all womankind as enemies ?

VALENTINE.

I am tired of war, and want some other passion.

JOVIAN.

Love is a sorry blemisher of laurels.

VALENTINE.

Far from it : 't is their most refreshing dew,
The soldier's impulse, sympathy, and guerdon,
The inspiration of all high achievement.

JOVIAN.

Farewell. I go to meet Sophia—Aye,
And by her special bidding.

VALENTINE.

Would 't were I.

JOVIAN.

I would much rather wait upon my breakfast,
For I am weary with this morning's work.

VALENTINE.

Thou sensualist !

JOVIAN.

You'll breakfast with me :
I have some choicest Persian wines to try.

VALENTINE.

How fortune follows those who least deserve it !

JOVIAN.

What should Sophia fall in love with me ?
These pent up princesses are sometimes sudden.

VALENTINE.

Hardhearted bacchanal, begone.

JOVIAN.

I go,
Fearing to risk my innocence.

VALENTINE.

Vain rake.

JOVIAN.

Pray for me Valentine, I need thy prayers,
For I'm tormented with presentiments
That something serious will ensue. Adieu.

[*Exeunt, severally.*]

SCENE—*Palace in a grove of palm trees.*

Enter SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

His name is Jovian—'t is a pleasing name,
His station Captain of the Emperor's guard :
But what a contrast to his frigid master !
With what a noble mien and martial grace
He took us captive, wreathed in courtesy.

The milkwhite steed that bore him, pranced on high,
As if he knew a victor warrior rode him,
Trophied with laurels, smiling on the strife.
—Poets have sung and minstrels chorus'd such—
Heroes of maiden's dreams, when they retire
From perfumed bath, to rest in citron groves,
Where sweet birds warble and cool fountains play,
To rock with gentle slumbers and gay visions.

Enter JOVIAN.

JOVIAN.

Princess, you bade me follow. I obey.

SOPHIA.

If you are wounded, Count—

JOVIAN.

Not I!

SOPHIA.

I feared,

Seeing your armour soiled with odious blows,
Your helmet cleft, your plume dishevelled so—

JOVIAN.

But not a wound to recommend me, Princess.

SOPHIA.

If you are hurt, I have a healing skill,
Taught by an ancient Arab, versed in charms.

JOVIAN.

I am a soldier, with a charmed life,
Battered in frequent frays, sometimes in love,
Often in drink, but never hurt by either :
War my vocation, love and wine my pay.

SOPHIA.

Must war for ever alienate you Romans
From Persia, land of elegance and love?

JOVIAN.

The rubric of my master's volume is, to arms :

What else but war was rough man made for, lady ?
 He bears and deals the asperities of life ;
 Its mitigations are assigned to woman,
 Heaven's mediatrix in this world of war,
 Where all is strife, of states and individuals :
 Except the truce of wine and peace of love,
 Battle and bloodshed are the common doom——

ISHMAEL (*within*).

Princess !

SOPHIA.

Ah ! I am called. Farewell !

JOVIAN.

So soon——

[*Exit SOPHIA.*]

By Julian's chastity, this interlude
 May e'en alleviate a camp's routine.

Re-enter SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

Shall we not meet again ?

JOVIAN.

Often, I hope.

ISHMAEL (*within*).

Princess !

SOPHIA.

When shall it be ? I'm coming.

ISHMAEL (*within*).

Princess !

SOPHIA.

Shall it not be at noon ?

JOVIAN.

Or sooner, lady.

SOPHIA.

Until then, we part. Farewell, till then.

ISHMAEL (*within*).

Princess!

[*Exit SOPHIA.*

JOVIAN.

Have I achieved a conquest here? It seems so.

Amen: if so, my stars have settled it.

I am an optimist, and must submit,

Like bashful brides, to what they can't refuse.

[*Exit.**Enter HORMISDAS and ZOPYRUS, from the Palace.*

HORMISDAS.

Beneath these palm trees let us vent our hearts
In large discourse of all we love, dear Zopyrus:
Here, in this shade, it is thy father's birthplace,
Talk of thyself, and I shall never tire—
Thyself, thy sister, and of Persia, talk.
My sweet Sophia—by yon sun, I swear,
I love that lovely daughter with a flame
Brighter than ever lit a nuptial torch;
And thou, my gallant son, my hope, my pride,
Oh! would I had a country, too, dear boy.

ZOPYRUS.

These palm trees, offspring of our mother earth,
Which feed and clothe, and shade and shelter us,
Exuberant of every goodly quality—
Does not their sight enrapture you with joy?
Is not the Tigris sweeter to your thirst,
More grateful to your sense than foreign streams?
These skies more azure, more serene this air?
Do not these scenes stir up your Persian blood
To yearn with glorious passion for your country?

HORMISDAS.

Alas, this little spot of conquered earth
Is all I own of what was once my country. But,

Welcome, children, to the narrow home
Which you have rendered more than I can wish.
Monarchs and patriots, in their high estate,
Might envy us this festival of love :
For your arrival makes a home indeed,
Whence, from the temple of domestic bliss,
That core of country, I, an outcast wretch,
Nestling embosomed in my family,
May look abroad, and hug myself within,
While tempests shake the troubled world without.

ZOPYRUS.

These are the groves that rang, when you were born,
With acclamations for a prince's birth.

HORMISDAS.

My youthful games and rambles were all here,
My morning's sports and evening's revelry,
The chase, the race, the dance, love's stolen walks ;
And when my countrymen beheld, they hailed
Me—then their pride and promise—now their scourge.

ZOPYRUS.

Oh, be their prince again; they long to hail
You their deliverer, their avenger, and——

HORMISDAS.

Bound fast to Rome by honour's rivetting,
I may not prince or patriot be——

ZOPYRUS.

Nor parent ?

All Persia burns to crown you, crown you king.

HORMISDAS.

Domestic love and filial reverence,
Thou fruit celestial of the golden age,
When men repasted and reposed with gods,
Be thou my crown and kingdom, faith and solace,
Equivalent for all, and better worth.

ZOPYRUS.

Yes, let the tempest of your soul have vent
In gushing tears, to soften and refresh.

HORMISDAS.

Born unto thrones, torn from prosperity,
And cast upon the world a vagabond,
One fondly cherished hope was all I had,
And shod my feet with its encouragement,
To breathe one sigh upon my Esther's grave,
To press our children to my aching heart.

ZOPYRUS.

Not waste your native land with fire and sword,
Nor drench it in your children's blood.

HORMISDAS.

Oh, no.

ZOPYRUS.

And you to be our executioner !
You to inflict our tortures, brandish high
The bloody axe, for Romans to exult at,
And gloat with savage triumph o'er our agonies !

HORMISDAS.

No more—Come, rather, my dear son, begin
The story of your life, the generous vow
That brought you to your father's powerless wing.

ZOPYRUS.

Ask rapine, havoc, ask despair to tell ;
Inquire of Persia's agonizing groans :
Does not your heart throb answers, father ? See
Disconsolate Persia, humbled by your blows,
Falls at your feet, your son to intercede
For succour, for salvation.

HORMISDAS.

How ! rash boy.

ZOPYRUS.

The trump of honour and of patriotism

D

Sounds its most animating peal to you.
Rome's brightest lessons flash from her best page.
Coriolanus and Camillus fierce
Subdued themselves to save her.

HORMISDAS.

Zopyrus !

ZOPYRUS.

In tears, in blood, your abject country pants,
Her king weeps mid the ruins of the throne,
Her peoples raise their eyes to you, for you
Alone can minister to their relief.

HORMISDAS.

I love my country better far than life :
But when calamity adopted me,
I took for my religion HONOUR, pride,
That palmy, sturdy growth of courtly hotbeds,
Instinct with courage which vouchsafes from shame :
The relique and the talisman I saved,
And which saved me—We are inseparable.
Wouldst thou, my son, deprive me of this charm ?
Wouldst strip thy father of his breastplate bright ?
The only consolation of a life
Unstained by shame and by remorse unstung ?
Unfortunate, but still uncompromising,
Wouldst make a traitor of me Zopyrus ?

ZOPYRUS.

Traitor ! What art thou ?

HORMISDAS.

An avenger : Leave me.

ZOPYRUS.

Whither to fly, without your presence, Sir ?
My life is staked, and ignominious death
The forfeit of a fruitless embassy.

HORMISDAS.

Short dream of happiness—then art thou gone ?

How exquisite the anguish thus to wake !
Better to sleep with Esther in the grave.
I have nor child nor country left—all lost.
Unnatural, unmerciful, begone,
Leave me, torture no more your father's doating sight ;
Leave me disconsolate to perish here,
With none to love, to help, or pity me.
I am your solemn enemy, and bound
To give you up to military law,
Denounced to a disgraceful death.

ZOPYRUS.

Denounce !

HORMISDAS.

There is but one alternative.

ZOPYRUS.

What 's that ?

HORMISDAS.

Yes ; ere compendious slander spins her net,
To mesh the victim—to the Emperor.

ZOPYRUS.

Sue for us ?

HORMISDAS.

Sue for clemency.

ZOPYRUS.

I spurn it.

This blade was forged by sorcery's black arts,
Tempered with stratagem and homicide :
On this and by this thus I swear allegiance.
When I forget my country, may my God
Forget and curse me too ; my withered arm
Be palsied ere it strike my native land !
Julian I will destroy, or be destroyed.

Enter ISHMAEL.

ISHMAEL.

Haste to the Princess !

ZOPYRUS.

What of her ?

ISHMAEL.

Undone !

Love countermines where treachery begun.
You are betrayed !

ZOPYRUS.

By whom ?

ISHMAEL.

By love,

Whose torch is flaring wheresoe'er you move :
Pause at the precipice before you leap—
Princes who sow the wind the whirlwind reap.

[*Exit.*

HORMISDAS.

Betrayed ! Then comes dishonour. Follow me,
Cruel and inconsiderate youth : alas !
What wretched stratagem hast thou prepared
To swallow all thy race—what devilish plot
To spring upon thy country and thy father ?

[*Exit.*

ZOPYRUS.

Plot ! What hast thou left us else but plots ?
Stubborn, perverse, implacable in wrong !
Yet all 's not lost I came to gain. Still Scævola
May consecrate a dagger in the heart
That riots o'er his country's downfall—Die,
Should fate will it, die a martyr for her.
What though with perfidy I take the field,
The invader leaves no other arms to wield.
Let subtle casuists decide the right
'Twixt treacherous triumph and all-conquering might.
Julian's heroic and vainglorious state,
And patriot Zopyrus' less honoured fate.

[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE—*Palace in the Grove.**Enter* HORMISDAS.

HORMISDAS.

The ties of kindred—what are they but base
And adventitious shackles of the vulgar !
Honour's the standard of a prince's life,
Stern, selfish, and uncompromising pride—
The conscience of the eminent and noble,
The soldier's salary, the hero's creed.
Then wherefore this misgiving ? Why endure
The first intrusion of disloyal doubts,
Whose sequel is a train of miscreant fears ?
To palter with a crime is cowards' guilt :
To meditate is to begin to perpetrate ;
And shame's sharp stings shoot with the thought of it.
Clandestine crime rankling in stifled dread,
Slow but as sure detection—what has death
Of terrors like this inward crucifying ?
I have died many deaths within this hour,
A felon's death : and shall I still die more ?
Or tear my children from my bursting heart,
And lay them at the lictor's feet—Strike, justice !
Their sufferings will be far from what I bear.

Enter SALLUST.

SALLUST.

Prince I am come to share your joy.

HORMISDAS.

My joy !

SALLUST.

None can rejoice more cordially, my friend,

In your most unexpected happiness ;
It harbingers good fortune for us all
Who bear the yoke of these ill-judged hostilities.

HORMISDAS.

Ah ! Sallust, there is poison in the cup
That sparkles with so bright a mantling.

SALLUST.

Hah !

HORMISDAS.

Eighteen unhappy years have now gone by
Since last I saw my children : Zopyrus,
All buoyant in a brilliant, headstrong youth,
Sophia, a sweet infant, laid within
These arms, and smiling at the embrace which wrung
Their parents' hearts with undivulged griefs.
Their mother drooped and died when I was gone,
Bequeathing our poor orphans to their country.
Listen to what was never told till now :—
No ceremony of cold wedlock joined
Us, close allied by blood and reared together.
Our bond was love,—our children are its offspring.
After long interval of banishment
They came—my blooming son and lovely daughter,
Their longing father to make happier
Than crowns and empires could ; and to my heart
I strained them rapturously. I thought myself
The happiest of the sons of this vile earth.—
I found two scorpions, coiled within my bosom,
Distilling treachery from poisoned tooth.—
Shall I not strangle them ? Must I not kill ?

SALLUST.

Fear not, but trust the Emperor's clemency.

HORMISDAS.

Give me a nobler, less degrading motive.
When Junius Brutus' sons incurred the law,

The Roman consul shrunk not—then, shall I?
Manlius condemned his valiant son to death,
Horatius slew his sister well-beloved,
Virginus stabbed his daughter to the heart——

SALLUST.

My faith abounds with holier instances
Than Roman stoicism can suggest.
When Abraham's only son was ask'd from high,
The patriarch hastened to Moriah's land,
Prepared with his own hands the sacrifice,
Nor paused, but bound the victim on the altar.

HORMISDAS.

Oh! there are those whose portion is the lees—
Who never quaff that which exhilarates.
Was I not born to be accursed? In vain
I court battle's extremest jeopardy.
Shall I seek suicide, the Roman sanction?
Or must I live to be my children's murderer?

Enter JOVIAN.

JOVIAN.

The Emperor desires your presence, Prince,
Now at his council; and yours also, præfect:
And he commands that you take with you there
Your son and daughter.

HORMISDAS.

Son and daughter!

JOVIAN.

Both.

[*Exit.*

HORMISDAS.

Ah! then I am anticipated—blasted.
The Emperor is informed. I am prevented—

SALLUST.

Do right. Fear nothing. Leave the rest to Providence.

Banish all fear. Summon your utmost strength.
I will stand by you through the cruel trial.

[*Exit.*

HORMISDAS.

That trial is at hand. Come, Zopyrus,
And thou, my hapless daughter, come thou, too,—
Though robed in innocence, you must be sacrificed.

Enter SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

Dear father, I am come to bring you peace.

HORMISDAS.

The peace of bloodshed is the fixed atonement.

SOPHIA.

Nay, there is healing in my intercession.

HORMISDAS.

How canst thou counteract thy brother's wiles?

SOPHIA.

By that which I was taught to dread—by LOVE.
The lesson of my life has been, beware of it
As fit for only humble spheres, not palaces;
For artisans and cottagers, the vulgar;
But unbecoming those born to ambition,
The bonds of states in politic alliance.
Thus schooled, from sequestration I was brought
Abrupt into the camp of Rome's fair chiefs.
I was to be the Emperor's bride, they thought;
But who can regulate the ways of love?
From the first moment that Count Jovian flashed
In all his peerless manhood on my sight,—
My vanquisher, my saviour, and my wooer,—
Our hearts embraced, and we have sworn to——

HORMISDAS.

And hast thou told him of thy brother's errand?

SOPHIA.

Yes, every thing; and he has sworn his troth.
They told us that the Romans are barbarians,
Their skies for ever gloomy, and their sun
Cold as the moon shines on our auburn maids.
But, oh, how false; no Persian prince can burn
With warmer heart than animates Count Jovian.

HORMISDAS (*aside*).

The victim of that selfish profligate,
Who thus controls our destiny: so, then,
Bitter first fruit of hesitation. But,
I will no longer pause.—Come, Zopyrus,
Sprung from my loins accursed, come forth, my son,
Fate calls us, and we must abide the call.

Enter ZOPYRUS.

ZOPYRUS.

Prepared for any fate, lo! here I am.
Death has no terrors that I cannot brave.
No! though a father nail me to the stake:
For PATRIOTISM is my only love;
With which enthusiast I defy the world.

HORMISDAS.

Follow me to the Emperor, my sovereign.

ZOPYRUS.

Lead on. I follow—to exult in death,
Dying a martyr in my country's cause.
My blood shall be the seed of thousands more,
Sworn as I swear to lay the aggressor low,
Or perish in the attempt—inform thy master—
To scatter disaffection through his ranks,
Decoy his legions into dark defiles,
With pestilence and famine aiding us,
To waste and harass them till none remains;
Vultures suspended on the tainted breeze,

E

And gaunt hyænas howling from their lairs
To banquet on their carcasses unburied.

HORMISDAS.

Unhappy children, come—to judgment—mercy.

SOPHIA.

Whither and wherefore ?

HORMISDAS.

To our destiny.

ZOPYRUS (*aside*).

Not unrevenged nor infamous to fall.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*The Emperor's council chamber. CHEOPS discovered in the elevated place, and THERSITES lolling on the council board.*

THERSITES.

I got three hundred rings and amulets
From the bare bodies of the Persians slain.

CHEOPS.

Are there no Georgian women prisoners ?

THERSITES.

And if there were, what wouldst thou with such spoil ?

CHEOPS.

Gold I can fabricate : but who may forge
Inimitable woman, without fire
From Heaven's bright furnace !

THERSITES.

Fie, old Cheops, fie !

Thou superannuated libertine,
Thy dingy brows frosted with seventy winters.

CHEOPS.

That is a calumny, maligning Greek :
In the green autumn of a well-spent life
I love the sex as thou dost gold, thou miser.

THERSITES.

Thy life well spent ! Yes, for tis well nigh gone :
And well got, too ; ransomed from slavery,
The galleys, and a malefactor's death :
In the arena as a gladiator,
I saw thee make thy fortune sword in hand.

CHEOPS.

They say thou hast a princess to thy share——

THERSITES.

Covered with rubies and with amethysts——

CHEOPS.

Timid and tawny as the mountain fawn ;
Methinks that I could charm her——

THERSITES.

As the snake

Subdues the eyeshot bird, thou basilisk.

CHEOPS.

Hush ! 'Tis the Emperor, I know his step.

THERSITES.

Plague on his vigilance. So soon ?

CHEOPS.

Begone.

[*Exit* THERSITES.]*Enter* JULIAN.

JULIAN.

The morn was ushered in with victory :
Since when adversity is signified
By omens of unquestionable drift.

CHEOPS.

The crisis, Sire, is pregnant with event
Which from the womb of time must soon be rent.

JULIAN.

A supernatural conviction strikes
With overawing force upon my mind,

That ere the rising of another sun
My star will set. Canst thou not ascertain?

CHEOPS.

Sorcery and magic's subtlest arts
Shall be explored in all their parts
To ascertain and to propitiate fate,
And fix, puissant Emperor, your date:
When dogstar dew by moonlight glisten,
And myriads of glowworms listen,
The hieroglyphs of Heaven shall be scanned,
And its interminable arches spanned,
To work the problems of astrology,
And draw its corollaries from on high.

JULIAN.

Long since, when I was resident in Gaul,
A druid, deeply skilled in divination,
Predicted, that from glory's pinnacle,
A poisoned arrow, sped by royal arm,
Should pierce me in the arms of victory—
My death requited by the slayer slain.
I cannot from such consummation shrink,
But court and thank the glorious providence.
Yet, if thy arts can raise or rend the veil,
And bring the doubtful future full in view—

CHEOPS.

Illustrious potentate depend upon me;
Nothing lies hid from my astrology.

JULIAN.

I would fain read the register of death.
Go, therefore, to thy incantations, sage,
Conjure the powers of darkness, and extract
The revelation :—Let me know my fate.

CHEOPS.

Your slave, imperial Sire, will circumvent
The circles of mysterious enchantment,

Reckon the stars that light the firmament;
Their heavenly essences will analyze,
And earth's malignant genius exorcise,
Good auspices to gather for his master,
And save him from all peril of disaster.

[*Exit.*

Enter SALLUST, JOVIAN, and VALENTINE.

JULIAN.

By formidable omens warned, my lords,
Against assaulting Persia's capital,
I have convened you here for your advice,
What next shall be our enterprise in arms.
Præfect, since first we met upon the Seine,
Your counsels oft have been my guide. Say now
What doth the Emperor of Rome behoove
In this conjuncture? Speak with all thy frankness.

SALLUST.

Most gracious sovereign, I am old enough
To bear in vivid memory that noon
When your illustrious uncle, Constantine,
Of British Helen the inspired son,
Fresh from Verona and from Turin's fields,
O'erthrew Maxentius near the walls of Rome,
Contending for the empire of the world.
Heading our nimble cavalry of Gaul,
Constantine, foremost in the rushing charge,
Routed the ponderous cuirassiers of Italy,
And Guards Prætorian seldom seen in flight;
Then as they fled, beneath the Milvian bridge
Stifled by thousands in the city's sight—
The hosts of infidelity exterminated.
Your majesty is swayed by auguries:—
Oh! had you seen the supernatural sign
Which in the Heavens eclipsed the noonday sun,

The sign of triumph on that glorious day,
The miracle announcing CHRISTENDOM—
The signal of salvation to mankind,
Of charity, humility, the sign,
Virtues till then unheard of, Heaven-born,
Unknown to Greece and unconceived by Rome,
The sign of peace on earth, good will to man,
The standard of the outcast Labarum
Which your immortal predecessor took
And all his army graved upon their arms
At that for ever memorable hour—
His bright example I need hardly plead
When I advise a Roman Emperor
To whom almost the world pays tribute, Sire,
Upon whose realms the sun for ever shines—
To sheathe the sword of conquest, and to bless
Mankind with respite from atrocious war;
To cultivate the nobler arts of peace,
Arts which Aurelian and the Antonines
Have raised above the ruffian fame of bloodshed.

JULIAN.

Thus far on Alexander's zodiac
To march triumphant—Now to retrograde!
And hybernate in dull pursuits of peace;
Forego the fiery stimulus of war,
Rapt'rous emotions and absorbing hopes,
Battle's intoxication, glorious death—
Instead of this, discomfiture, contempt;
To live an irksome round of civic being
And die at last excruciate by disease:—
Jovian, I must appeal to you—but flatter not.

JOVIAN.

Camp-born and bred, I'm but a soldier, Sire,
War both my calling and amusement too;
And as a nobleman should be am ignorant

Of every thing that is not military:
Yet for my gracious sovereign's creed I feel
The reverence that becomes a faithful subject.
If then your deities are adverse, Sire,
Can you not leave the capital behind
And lead your army to the fertile south
Whither the Macedonian marched before?
Hyrcania stretches out her limbs supine,
And spicy India blooms o'er boundless plains.
The solstice threatens pestilence, which soon
Will bar your entrance on those latitudes.

SALLUST (*aside.*)

The parasite!—(*to Julian*)—Leave Ctesiphon behind!
To separate us from our reinforcements?

JOVIAN.

Leave it to starve.

SALLUST.

Forsake our fleet too!

JOVIAN.

Burn it.

SALLUST.

What! and thus cut off all retreat?

JULIAN.

A Roman Emperor never must retreat;
Onward for ever, is his countersign,
Subsisting and recruited from his conquests.
What say you Valentine?

VALENTINE.

Excuse me, Sire,

If my opinion differs from you all;
I neither would retreat nor turn aside,
But scale those bulwarks or be buried under them.
'Tis now too late to be deterred by omens,
Though wrote in lightning and proclaimed by thunder.
Give but your order for the storm to night,

Let all the elements of warfare loose,
And mount and regulate the onslaught, Sire,
Our eagles, with their plumage all unfurled,
Shall win their way resistless into Ctesiphon.
What are all portents when the trumpet sounds?
What is all counsel to the shout of battle?
Your troops no sign but your commanding voice—
Calm on a fiery charger, need—but forward—
Christians and Pagans from all realms conscribed,
Italians, Germans, Greeks, and Gauls, one mass
Invincible of disciplined array,
Banded together by the Roman name,
And headed by their chosen Emperor—
Will rush to conflict, and despite of fate
Sweeping triumphant where your falchion points,
Will captivate success and conquer portents.

Enter HORMISDAS, ZOPYRUS, SOPHIA, *and* ISHMAEL.

JULIAN.

Thrice welcome, Prince, our cynosure, who bring
Your satellites to guide our march benighted.
Fortune has thwarted us; distracted counsels
Superadd their ominous perplexity.
The Gods themselves admonish to spare Ctesiphon.
Shall we then burn our fleet and seek the south?

HORMISDAS (*aside*).

Is there not respite in that question? Jovian
Has not denounced us, or the Emperor
Would not ask counsel—Spy, thou art reprieved.

JULIAN.

Conquest the flamens found, but drenched in blood—
The stoutest champions of the Roman host
Strewed like autumnal foliage on the ground,
Discord and slaughter, rout and retrograde,
Vexing the victor vanquished in his turn.

I war not with the Gods, nor would erect
My obelisk upon my country's grave.

ZOPYRUS (*aside*).

Infernal deities of barbarous Rome
Dismay the invader, and be my allies.

HORMISDAS.

Let me entreat your clemency, oh Cæsar !
For this infatuated youth. Approach,
My son, and fall down at the Emperor's feet.

ZOPYRUS (*aside*).

Strike true, strike home,—for country strike, strike true.

JULIAN.

Rise, rise, Prince Zopyrus, nor kiss the earth ;
Whatever your offence, it is forgiven :
Your father's services are more than ransom.

HORMISDAS.

Oh ! let me kneel, and bathe your hand with tears
Of joy, that gush from parent's gratitude.
Thou, too, dear son, thou wilt acknowledge this,
With all the fervent thanks of youthful heart.

ISHMAEL (*aside*).

The hour of retribution is not come
For prostrate Persia to demolish Rome.

JULIAN.

Rise, Prince, I ask not thanks, but services :
Teach me the way to Persia's fastnesses——

ZOPYRUS.

Scourge of my country, take thy lesson, death !

*(As ZOPYRUS and HORMISDAS rise from JULIAN's
feet, ZOPYRUS attempts to assassinate JULIAN, but
is prevented by HORMISDAS, who wrests the dag-
ger from ZOPYRUS.)*

HORMISDAS.

Traitor and parricide ! This thy gratitude !

F

Nay, plunge the infernal poniard in my heart
Rather than his, our generous benefactor !

JOVIAN.

Assassin ! die—be mine the sword to smite
And sweep thee, monster, from the earth—die, wretch !

SOPHIA.

Spare him ! Oh, spare him ! Let me stay thine arm.
Ah, let not blood of mine by thee be shed !

*(As JOVIAN rushes on ZOPYRUS to kill him, SOPHIA
throws herself into JOVIAN's arms, and prevents
him.)*

VALENTINE.

Then must I rid the world of such a viper.

ISHMAEL.

Not while his faithful slave may interpose
His naked bosom to thy murderous blows.

*(ISHMAEL puts himself between VALENTINE and
ZOPYRUS.)*

VALENTINE.

Fool-hardy caitiff, stand aside—avaunt !
Or I will sever thee from top to toe.

ZOPYRUS.

Shield me not, Ishmael, I want no shelter ;
But hurl defiance in these minions' teeth—
Curse on my arm that missed their tyrant's heart.
Think ye, base parasites of ill-got power,
That fear 's an inmate of this unarmed breast ;
Or this eye blenches when your weapons flash ?
Strike, slaves, I dare you ; butcher me at once,
Or send me forth to public execution :
Racked and dismembered, with my latest gasp
I will defy and curse the power of Rome.

JOVIAN.

Demoniac murderer !

VALENTINE.

Thus take thy doom !

*(Jovian and Valentine rush together on Zopyrus.)*HORMISDAS *interposes.*)

HORMISDAS.

Not in his father's blasted sight : hold, hold !
Till I have plucked the eyes from out my head,
And torn my heart away—My son, my son !

ZOPYRUS.

Ye robber Romans ! do your worst—ye ruffians.
I am no son of any Roman slave.

SALLUST.

I must bespeak forbearance, gentlemen,
Lest this assassination justify
The foul attempt at t' other—Nay, forbear.

JULIAN.

Infuriate youth, I pardon thee once more ;
Again for thy much outraged father's sake :
Go hence, a monument of Roman clemency.

ZOPYRUS.

Tormentor of mankind,—my country's plague,
Ambition's toy, and Superstition's fool,
Fit archetype of overreaching Rome,
With fame inebriate and begrimed with gore
Cementing the vainglorious pyramid
Which lifts thy iron sceptre high above
The prostrate nations trodden down by thee—
Here, to thy beard, I vow that bloody hate,
That national and everlasting hate
Which Persians with their mothers' milk imbibe—
Which in my bones and marrow thrills against thee.

JULIAN.

To your protection I commit them, Sallust ;
Let no licentious indignation harm,

But send them safe escorted from our camp.
Counts Jovian and Valentine, attend me.

[*Exeunt JULIAN, JOVIAN, and VALENTINE.*]

SALLUST.

Unhappy children, take a last embrace
Of your distracted father.

HORMISDAS.

Tears ! dear friend——

SALLUST.

May consolation, like to Hermon's dew,
Shed a mysterious unction on your griefs
From Sion's hill, for I can offer none.

HORMISDAS.

Oh ! for the succour of a tear——I envy you,
For I am petrified, and cannot weep ;
Nor tear, nor child, nor hope, nor comfort left ;
Bereft of all, I am a wretch indeed !

SOPHIA.

My father, ah, my father ! Nay, dear brother,
Is there no comfort for him, no relief ?

ZOPYRUS.

None that I care of. I am as a stone,
Impenetrable to all filial love ;
Oppression has deprived me of a father,
And left me none to care for but my country.

HORMISDAS.

Farewell, Sophia !

SOPHIA.

No, we must not part.

HORMISDAS.

I am a rock where only vultures hide,
Beat by incessant tempests, where thy life
Must not be wasted. Fare thee well—for ever !
And may a parent's blessing still attend
My son—may he be happier than his father.

ZOPYRUS.

Hope's rainbow hangs its prism on the clouds :
Mine is a cause—a heart—that scorns despair,
Exhaustless of resource and enterprise.

[*Exeunt SALLUST, ZOPYRUS, SOPHIA, and ISHMAEL.*

HORMISDAS.

My native soil, wilt thou not open wide,
Thy traitor son to bury quick and hide ?
Is there no whirlwind of our parching air
To bear me from these regions of despair !
Where an eternal night of gloom and grief
Hangs round me without morning or relief.

[*Exit.*



ACT III.

SCENE—*Castle on a mountain overhanging the river. Roman fleet in flames.*

Enter JULIAN, SALLUST, HORMISDAS, JOVIAN, VALENTINE, and Soldiers.

JULIAN.

Now for the palaces on yonder eminence ;
So you advise us, Prince !

HORMISDAS.

Cæsar, I do.

JULIAN.

Where gilded minarets o'erlook the clouds,
And the young eagles love to rest their wings,
There will we light our altars to the Gods

To whom that blazing fleet is sacrificed,
 Wafting our incense to the firmament—
 A conflagration that cuts off retreat,
 And leaves no choice but victory or death.
 Soldiers, ascend the mountain, while gay peals
 Of martial music animate your march,
 And take repose beneath those battlements,
 Where erst Semiramis her trophies hung :
 Like giants rest, refreshing for new spoil ;
 Recount achievements till you long for more :
 O'er flasks of wine sing the exploits of war—
 But ere to-morrow's sunrise, up ! to arms !
 When you shall riot free in Ctesiphon,
 And with its booty recompense your toils.

SOLDIERS.

Long live the Emperor ! Lead to Ctesiphon.

JULIAN.

The first that enters there I will promote.

SOLDIERS.

Long live the Emperor ! Houra, houra !

JULIAN.

How the hoarse melody of martial shouts
 Vibrates delightfully on conqueror's ears !
 The gods forbid assault of Ctesiphon,
 Till on our backs we took the Tigris up,
 As soon we shall—and then for victory !—
 Say you not so, our pioneer ?

HORMISDAS.

Yes, Sire.

*[Exeunt, marching up the mount to music, and
 entering the castle, all but SALLUST, who is de-
 tained by HORMISDAS.]*

HORMISDAS.

Sallust, I must unlade my labouring breast,
 Bursting with yet more anguish to impart :—

Oh, I am steeped in shame!—and it doth smite me.
The deep foundations of this caverned hill,
Crowned by dilapidated palaces
Which shadow forth my country's fallen state—
Those caverns comprehend the catacombs
Of Persia's countless catalogue of kings ;
An Eastern sepulchre, vast and mysterious :
A subterranean passage from the crypt
Leads underneath the river to the city,
Elaborated in those ancient days,
Whose marvellous works transcend our modern means.
That burial-place and avenue are known
Alone to princes and their confidants—
With sacred rites and awful oaths divulged ;
A solemn secret, kept from age to age,
The sanctuary of the royal race.
The ashes of my forefathers are there,
And there were mine entitled to repose :
But earthquakes would uproot the sepulchre,
And scatter my remains to the four winds
That reek with leprosy and pestilence,
Rather than such a traitor's bones should rest
Entombed with patriots and heroines—
In one delirious moment I betrayed,
To make atonement for my son's offence,
And ward suspicion from myself, I told,
Nay, sought the Emperor, and told him all—
Yes, Persia's last asylum, while she sleeps,
Is by a perjured pander thus betrayed—
Who leads the spoiler to deflour his country—
All immolated to my traitor fears.

SALLUST.

Let us not linger here, but join our friends ;
Some hovering foe might intercept us else.

HORMISDAS.

Our friends! I have none—all mankind detests me.
False to my country and my sacrament,
Where shall I hide? Far from man's countenance,
A grovelling, trembling, self-chastising slave.

[*Exeunt up the mountain.*]

Enter ZOPYRUS from a cavern at its base.

ZOPYRUS.

Cursed instruments of domination! blaze
And light the skies with this catastrophe.
'Tis Julian's doomsday: Lo, his funeral pyre—
Whole hecatombs of Romans slain shall grace it.
Fate from the furies snatched a quenchless torch,
And flung its brands throughout that fleet. So may
Invasion's means for ever be consumed.
Insulted river! expiation take
From haughty prows careering o'er thy stream,
And mix their ashes with thy dark alluvion.
From towers unconquered, Ctesiphon! enjoy
This, the beginning of the Roman end.

Enter ISHMAEL.

ISHMAEL.

Hail and congratulation to my lord!

ZOPYRUS.

Most welcome to my constant accessory:
All thou foretold is verified, and more;
The fleet is burned, the army undermined,
Reposing in the palaces, our victims.
These caverns teem with men in arms, who burn
Like a volcano, to burst forth above,
By the clandestine passages that lead
Throughout this master-work of mechanism,
And overwhelm the Romans as they slumber.

ISHMAEL.

Where is the Princess ?

ZOPYRUS.

Fled.

ISHMAEL.

An evil portent.

ZOPYRUS.

Our onset must outstrip her treachery.

We 'll strike our blow ere Julian draws his sword :

Come, for I pant to lead my soldiers on—

Encamped among the tombs of all my race—

To slay the invaders caught in their carousals.

Blessed is the perjury that saves a state,

Nor cursed the sacrilege to pitch a camp

Where patriot monarchs rest in honoured graves.

Thou ! love of country, be the guide, the plea,

And genius of our daring enterprise.

*[Exeunt, by the cavern.]*SCENE—*Apartment in the palaces.**Enter HORMISDAS.*

HORMISDAS.

How like a slave I hug this load of life

From day to day by base manurance kept,

Though my whole harvest in this vale of wo,

My very soil itself is all dried up !

I am a waste, where nothing flourishes,

But all is barren, pestilent, forbidding.

Life, what is it but one long lingering death !

Would it had been my lot to die when young,

Or ere thus rotten-ripe my fruit defiles

Whatever should be sheltered by my shade !

Departed Esther, happy in oblivion,

Oh ! that I were with thee in sleep of death !

G

Methought I saw my Esther yesternight,
Her lovely form in alabaster draped,
Her raven hair wreathed with a crown of thorns,
A zone of adders clasped around her waist,
Their barbed tongues brandishing from her bosom,
Her dulcet voice hoarse as the trumpet's blast—
Thus she accosted me—Who's there? My daughter?

Enter SOPHIA.

SOPHIA.

Dear father!

HORMISDAS.

Dar'st thou venture here again?
Begone, or I shall kill thee! 't is my duty:
I am a reptile that destroy my young,
And I must strangle thee: it is my nature:
No, not my nature, but, my child, I swore
To slay thee: then beware of my embrace.

SOPHIA.

Through many risks of person and good name,
I am come hither to prevent your death:
Yes, dearest father, I am come to save,
To snatch you all from imminent destruction.

HORMISDAS.

Away, away, you told me so before,
Then tore my heart out!

SOPHIA.

Nay, but hear me, Sir,
Upon my bended knees I swear—

HORMISDAS.

Swear not,
Leave perjury to me, I've sworn enough.

SOPHIA.

Your life depends upon my intervention;

Nay, not an instant is there to be lost,
Or all will be surprised and massacred.

HORMISDAS.

So much the better—I am glad to hear it.

SOPHIA.

My brother—

HORMISDAS.

What of him?

SOPHIA.

Has filled the tombs

With soldiers, who, in dreadful ambuscade—

HORMISDAS.

'T is false !

SOPHIA.

It is too true ; and they will burst
Upon your sleep, and slay you unawares.

HORMISDAS.

Impart it to thy Roman lover then,
As false and fair of speech as thou ; go, sphinx,
Delighting in destruction, go to him,
Practise on Jovian—me thou hast deceived
And made a monster of—begone ! I hate thee.

SOPHIA.

By all his love, I swear !—nay, spurn me not—
That he and you, the Emperor, and all,
Repose on a volcano, ripe to burst
And hurl you to destruction.

HORMISDAS.

Loose thy grasp,
That I may fly from thee, false prophetess !
Would'st have me fall into thy snare again,
Whose bait is love, but rivet is despair ?

[*Exit.*

SOPHIA.

What then remains, but that I seek Count Jovian

Throughout this den of soldiery ? Alas !
It is no time for woman's fears or shame,
When all my sex's sympathies are roused :
Yet whither go, through the licentious camp ?
False, said my father, Jovian false ? ah no,
Else thou art lost, Sophia, beyond hope.
While furious Zopyrus his way hews out
By fierce exploit and bloody stratagem,
Swifter than death, on love's caressing wings,
I fly to Jovian——

Enter THERSITES, drunk, stopping her.

THERSITES.

Who goes there ? Stand, ho !
And give the countersign.

SOPHIA.

Mercy upon me !

THERSITES.

I am a sacred gander here on guard.

SOPHIA.

How fortunate—Count Jovian's groom—Thersites.

THERSITES.

By my Bœotian blood, the Persian Princess :
What, art thou come again, my sorrel prisoner ?

SOPHIA.

Where is thy master ?

THERSITES.

No where ; for I have none.

SOPHIA.

Count Jovian—where is he ? quick——

THERSITES.

Getting drunk,
At high symposium : I am touched myself :
The army is all drunk by general orders ;
The Emperor himself for once allowed it,

In spite of all old Christian Sallust said.
Persia's the land for women, wine, and horses ;
My horse neighed first, and I am king Darius.
Such as you see me, I'm a royal highness ;
I am, by Jove, a monarch in disguise :
Appeal from me when drunk to me when sober,
And you shall hear it all : I'm now incog.

SOPHIA.

I pry'thee, haste, conduct me to Count Jovian.

THERSITES.

Conduct a female to my master ! Discipline,
Thou pride and safeguard of a soldier, hear this !
For shame, young woman !

SOPHIA.

I must go, and quickly.

THERSITES.

Disturb my master at his seventh flask !
Let a young woman in to spoil his supper !

SOPHIA.

Here, take this gold.

THERSITES.

I am a mercenary,
And talents, when of gold, we Greeks delight in.

SOPHIA.

Now haste, for I bear dreadful tidings,
Which cannot brook delay.

THERSITES.

Thou gilded spy !

A cunning Greek cannot be caught in liquor ;
I know you all, ye wolves in golden fleece :
Where is my friend, puissant Ishmael !
He and I had a parting bottle, lady,
O'er which we swore eternal amity ;
He filled my head and heart with generous wine,
Ballasted me, top-heavy else, with gold.

SOPHIA (*aside*).

This gabbling drunkard, he will ruin all.

(*to him*) For his sake, then, befriend me, good Thersites.

THERSITES.

His largess I requited with Greek coin,
And gave him all I could, a mint of talk :
As liquor is a confidential medium,
I told old Ishmael all our Roman secrets ;
All I could gather of the Emperor's plans
By dint of overhearing and such like—
The raising of the siege of Ctesiphon,
Burning our fleet, climbing this giddy hill,
Where my head spins to think how high we are.

SOPHIA (*astde*).

Dreadful suspense ! Alas, what shall I do,
Alone and unprotected as I am ?

THERSITES.

For what's the use of keeping those things secret
Which tell themselves?—We Grecians like to talk,
To sing, and dance, and drink in moderation.
Excessive drinking is detestable ;
But just enough to stir a soldier's mettle
Encourages, enlivens, and adorns.

SOPHIA.

Count Jovian will be angry if you haste not
To take me to him instantly. Then hasten.

THERSITES.

Count Jovian is commander of the Guard
Who make and unmake Roman Emperors :
But who commands Count Jovian ? Who but I ?
Let him fight, drink, or wench, I order it ;
He cannot dress without my handywork,
And when he mounts his horse, I hold the stirrup.

SOPHIA.

Wilt thou accept of this aigrette, Thersites,
Which here I take from my tiara?

THERSITES.

Yes.

SOPHIA.

'Tis all that I have left to give to thee.

THERSITES.

There is a sapphire ring upon your hand.

SOPHIA.

I add that, willingly.

THERSITES.

And so I take it :

Rings and tiaras are seducing gifts ;
But my stern probity will bear more yet.
What else hast thou ?

SOPHIA.

Nay, you have all I had ;
Now, lead me to Count Jovian, I entreat.

THERSITES.

I can bear more corruption yet, much more.
Seduce me, I entreat ; I love seduction.

SOPHIA.

Ah ! cease to torture me ; his life and thine—
The lives of all depend on my despatch.

THERSITES.

Despatch thee, Princess ! kill my prisoner ! Never !

SOPHIA.

Yes, kill me, straight,—'t will be an act of mercy,—
Rather than torture me to death, thou trifler !

THERSITES.

In tears ! I shall be overpowered at last ;
Tears are the ammunition of the sex—

Sword, shield, and helmet, battering ram and all :
They panoply your breasts and transfix ours.

SOPHIA.

By all thy hopes and fears let me conjure——

THERSITES.

You conjure me in vain, fair conjuror.

SOPHIA.

Count Jovian——

THERSITES.

Must not be disturbed at supper ;
Drinking he loves, but women he despises :
And as for you, he hates the dynasty—
Your moping father, and your fiery brother.

SOPHIA.

Nay, then,—compelled by deperation, slave,
To vindicate my errand, on thy life
I charge thee to conduct me to thy master—
No parley, on your life——Lead on, or die !

(SOPHIA *snatches* THERSITES's sword from the scabbard, and assaults him with it.)

THERSITES.

Give quarter—I surrender—at discretion.
A desperate woman is a dangerous thing.

SOPHIA.

Forthwith conduct me to Count Jovian, then.

THERSITES.

Oh, if you slay me, do not strip me, too ;
Spare me my plunder, hard-earned prize of war.

SOPHIA.

Keep all, and life—but lead me to Count Jovian.

THERSITES.

These are the terms of my capitulation :
My baggage and my life are spared.

SOPHIA.

They are,

Upon condition that you find your master,
Without the utterance of a single word,
Or pausing of one instant in delay.

THERSITES.

Agreed to ; they are honourable terms,
To which, thus overpowered, brave men may yield.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*The Tombs beneath the Palaces. A subterranean crypt, formed by a colonnade, supporting inverted arches, covering the whole stage. Persian soldiers under arms, with torches. Enter ZOPYRUS, armed, and ISHMAEL, dressed for vaticination, carrying a drum, a skull, a sword wrapped in cloth, a bow and arrows, and followed by VALERIAN, an extremely old and decrepid man, crowned with thorns, and led in chains by attendants.*

ZOPYRUS.

Avengers of our country's wrongs, all hail !
Marshall'd in mansions of departed kings,
Now mausoleums of the patriot quick :
All hail ye resting bournes of Persia's lords,
Whose canonized manes would rise up
And be incarnate, could you join with us
In arms to share the glories of to-night ;
We fight for hearths and altars, death or victory ;
Death to our country's unrelenting foes,
Or burial of the Persian nation here,
Princes and people, in this sepulchre,
The common grave of all who honoured fall,
And sleep together in these sacred rests—
The graves of monarchs, hitherto, but now
Open to all who for their country die.

(ISHMAEL, *with reverence, and many prostrations,*

H

takes the sword from its covering, and hands it to ZOPYRUS, who kisses it with enthusiasm).

ZOPYRUS.

Soldiers, and sons of Persia, lo! the sword,
A consecrated relique, long enshrined,
Enclosed within the deepest sanctuary,
With which great Cyrus, shepherd's foster-son,
Conquered his way to brick-built Babylon,
And overthrew the empire Nimrod founded—
Once more displayed to light our way to triumph.

ISHMAEL.

(with the cadence and action of vaticination).

Let its gleams be your light in the fight of to-night,
And accursed be flight from the might of its sight.
Rescue your empire, sons of fire,
The Sun is your Sire, and salvation your hire.

SOLDIERS.

Prince! to the onset, lead us onward, charge!

ISHMAEL *(handing ZOPYRUS the bow and arrows).*

Draw clean to the head—the arrow which sped,
From this bow shall lay low, the great foe with the dead.

ZOPYRUS.

Ye charmed and poisoned ministers of death,
Bury your barbs deep in the invader's heart,
And fester there till freedom glads our country.

ISHMAEL *(handing ZOPYRUS the skull).*

Pledge from this skull, which mantles thick and full
With blood from Roman hearts, transfixed by Persian darts.

ZOPYRUS.

Pledge me, companions, in this bowl of blood,
And swear amidst the ashes of your kings,
While thus their last descendant treads upon
The captive emperor of hateful Rome—
Swear to bring Julian to Valerian's doom.

(ISHMAEL forces VALERIAN to prostrate himself,

while ZOPYRUS puts his foot on VALERIAN's neck and drinks).

ISHMAEL.

Indomitable sons of Persia swear !

SOLDIERS.

We swear.

ISHMAEL.

By earth, by water, and by air,
To die to night, or drive the invaders home—
Eternal hatred, war, and death to Rome.

(The skull is passed round and drunk from by the soldiers).

ZOPYRUS.

Ye petrifications ! ornature of tombs,
By time's hand fretted on these aisles where death
Reigns paramount—bear witness to our rites,
And register the oath which dooms us all
To die, or conquer, ere we see the sun.

SOLDIERS.

Hours—To action—lead us to the foe.

ISHMAEL *(beating the drum)*.

Strike the charge on Roman hide,
Flayed alive, in cold blood dyed,
Flayed alive let Roman's skin,
Sound, the battle to begin.

ZOPYRUS.

The charm is now complete, except the victim :
Lead him, good Ishmael, to the stake, and while
We make the onset, torture him to death.

ISHMAEL.

Valerian to be crucified ! tortured, impaled, and flayed
alive—

Tear his heart out, break his bones, pluck his eyes out,
mock his moans,

Enjoy his shrieks, and revel in his groans.

SOLDIERS.

Crucify, crucify, flay him alive.

VALERIAN.

Come parting pangs, close my long agony,
Strike, ye barbarians, and revenge me, Rome!

ZOPYRUS.

Invisible and omnipresent deity,
Whose temples are the hearts of honest men,
And purest worship is their rectitude,
Come from thy dwelling in the elements,
Conduct us on the way to immortality!

ISHMAEL.

Perpetual darkness gloom our skies,
Ye buried, from these hidden graves arise!
All Persian palaces be tombs, all Persian graves
Like this be camps, ere, Persians, we die slaves!
[*Exeunt* ISHMAEL, and VALERIAN led away to be sa-
crificed.]

ZOPYRUS.

Now, comrades, follow me—

SOLDIERS.

Onward, hours!

ZOPYRUS.

Hark! how the hoof of tyrant Rome above
Tramples upon our palaces usurped,
And to the centre shakes this pile, the house of kings,
Defiled by hostile orgies: Come to vengeance—
See the expiring flames of yonder fleet,
Flare through these vaults and signal us to action;—
Our watch-word is—death to the Emperor—
As lightning rends the monarch of the woods,
Before the thunder can announce the storm,
So let our onset be; strike first, then shout:
Slay Julian as he slumbers, then proclaim
His death—but crush him ere he cries for help.

[*Exeunt omnes, by various outlets and stairways.*]

Enter ESTHER.

ESTHER.

What tumult rouses Esther from the tomb,
And to the innermost recess invades
These dark abodes of solitude and death,
Where nought but prayer till now has ever broke
The solemn stillness of DEVOTION'S mansion?
Armed multitudes! With warlike instruments,
And fire-brands—hark! their long resounding tramp—
See! the clandestine outlets of the tombs
Open—They swarm into the palaces.
Do I yet live? Or are these scenes of death—
Tenants of other worlds beyond the earth,
Come to conduct me to their nether homes?
Hence, to my cenotaph, take refuge there,
And there await the issue; if 't is death,
I have for sixteen years expected him,
With constant prayer and deep repentance armed,
Humbly prepared t' obey his awful call.

[*Exit.*

SCENE—*The Emperor's apartment in the Palaces—*
Enter JULIAN and CHEOPS meeting.

JULIAN.

The horoscope? Is 't worked?

CHEOPS.

Yes, Sire, 'tis done.

JULIAN.

And what 's the issue?

CHEOPS.

Shall I tell, my Lord?

JULIAN.

Tell? Wherefore not? I have no fear of it.

CHEOPS.

Dread Sire——

JULIAN.

If portents ever tell the truth, the time
That crowns my work is nigh.

CHEOPS.

'T is not the time,
My sovereign lord, but mode, that——

JULIAN.

What? The mode?

Why should I care for that? Life is a dream,
The shadow of a shade, a flight, a water-wake,
Closing, we know not when, nor where, nor how;
Which with preposterous care we nurse and vex,
And when we leave it whither is our way?
Except renown, what is there here or there
Worth caring for? That I have made secure.

CHEOPS.

The star, imperial Cæsar, certifies
By suicide, apostate Julian dies.

JULIAN.

By suicide? Apostate Julian! Look!

*(Enter suddenly by a secret aperture sprung open,
ZOPYRUS and ISHMAEL, the latter with the bow
and arrows).*

JULIAN.

Almighty powers! See where Rome's genius comes
Armed all in proof, to summon me to death.

ZOPYRUS.

Tyrant! say rather 'tis thine evil genius,
Come, not as heretofore, disguised or fettered,
But armed to rid the world of thee—Die, despot!

JULIAN.

Assassin! Art thou come again? False fiend,

Disgrace of manly warfare, I defy thee,
Barbarian, even unawares I dare thee.

(JULIAN and ZOPYRUS fight).

CHEOPS.

Help, ho! The Emperor! Count Jovian! Guards!
Rescue the Emperor! Guards, rescue, help!

ISHMAEL.

The sword of Cyrus fails, on him who never quails;
Shoot then the poisoned arrow, to rankle in his marrow.

(ISHMAEL hands ZOPYRUS, retreating, the bow and
arrow, who shoots it into JULIAN's side, when Zo-
PYRUS and ISHMAEL retreat as they entered, just
as SALLUST with soldiers enter and protect JU-
LIAN).

SALLUST.

Arm! and set forth, our Emperor—all to arms!
We are betrayed, our fortress swarms with foes.

JULIAN.

Betrayed!

SALLUST.

I fear by that retreating Parthian:
Myriads of swarthy soldiers storm our rest;
Hark! how they shout.—Their cry is, you are slain,
The chambers of these dismal palaces
Are deluged with a torrent of attack:
Asleep, unarmed, unnerved with wine, our men
Contend with unknown foes and fearful odds.
Panic more fatal than the battle-axe,
Spreads indiscriminate slaughter—but you bleed.

CHEOPS (*aside to SALLUST.*)

The Emperor is hurt to death, my Lord,
Mortally wounded by a poisoned arrow.

SALLUST.

Oh, are you hurt, Sire?

JULIAN.

No, not much.

SALLUST.

Alas !

JULIAN.

And let it not be known, I charge you, Sallust :
The troops would be discouraged—'T is but slight.

CHEOPS (*aside to SALLUST*).

It is incurable, my lord ; no power
Can save the Emperor from speedy death.
He will survive until it is extracted :
But when he plucks the arrow from his side,
With his own hand he ends his glorious life.

SALLUST.

Who trust the sword shall perish by the sword :
When Julian dies, the noblest infidel
That ever unregenerate fell, expires.

Enter VALENTINE, with Soldiers.

VALENTINE.

Haste to the conflict, haste, our Emperor,
Your bravest soldiers sink before their foes,
Who shout, till echoed from ten thousand throats,
Julian is slain—the Emperor is slain.
These walls reverberate your death, proclaimed
By numberless and furious enemies.

Enter HORMISDAS.

HORMISDAS.

Where is the Emperor ?

JULIAN.

Here, Emperor still.

HORMISDAS.

Then 't is a false report—thank heaven—What 's this ?
Blood ! Are you hurt, Sire ?

JULIAN.

No, not much.

SALLUST (*aside to HORMISDAS*).

To death.

HORMISDAS.

Hah ! perjured traitor, is it so indeed ?

Look on that wreck of majesty ! thy work,

Thy impious, cursed, treacherous, coward work.

JULIAN.

Let the charge sound ! Deal none but fatal blows ;

Let carnage loose upon our dastard foes :

To desolation give this destined land,

Till it weep tears of blood—'t is my command—

Julian commands—to deathless deeds inspired,

Goaded by glory, and by vengeance fired.

*(JULIAN falls senseless into the arms of SALLUST,**HORMISDAS, and VALENTINE.*

ACT IV.

SCENE—*Apartment in the Palaces.**Enter JOVIAN and VALENTINE, meeting.*

JOVIAN.

Good morrow, Valentine. Is it not dawn ?

VALENTINE.

It is, after a memorable night,

Glorious to all, fatal to some ; but you——

JOVIAN.

I own my recreancy : Spare me, spare me—

For love, with showers of philters, has, I fear,

I

Destroyed the first fruits of my laurel crop,
Supplanting it with weeds of wantonness.

VALENTINE.

Still, saucy smiles of conquest and complacency,
Peer from beneath thy mildew, blighted youth :
Confess, where did you skulk, where pass the night ?

JOVIAN.

In heaven.

VALENTINE.

While your Prætorians were engaged
In desperate encounter, hand to hand.

JOVIAN.

Far raised above this world of strife and blood,
Teeming with lamentable accidents,
I hovered in the Empyrean, high entranced
And idolized by sublimated love.

VALENTINE.

Since I have carried arms, I never knew
So perilous, so glorious a night.

JOVIAN.

Since I have loved, never did I enjoy
So enviable, so marvellous a night.

VALENTINE.

Braggart, speak out, or burst with vanity.

JOVIAN.

Can'st thou be secret ? Yes, I know thou can'st.

VALENTINE.

Have I not kept whole volumes of amours
For thee, with whom all love is but parade,
Whose passion is not to succeed but boast ?

JOVIAN.

Summoned from supper, as you recollect,
I found the Princess in the ante-room,
Compelling, sword in hand, my valet drunk,
To lead the way to my apartment—Hold,

Reserve your admiration for the sequel :
Ere she could speak, the shouts of onset burst,
And struck us with amazement ; then alarmed,
She waved her hand in silence, and I followed,
As, all impatience, thus she beckoned me,
Threading the secret outlets of retreat,
By long ascent of winding passages,
Up to the summit of the citadel :
There she emerged upon the battlement,
And led me to an overhanging niche,
That beetles o'er the pile—nought but the moon
Resplendent from the firmament above,
To witness our asylum : Seated there,
Above the mists of night and conflict's roar,
Which floated on the atmosphere beneath,
Even then, and there, and thus, Sophia gave
That confidence which saved you all from death.

VALENTINE.

We saved ourselves by dint of sturdy fight,
Without your vaunting, idle, go-between :
Torrents of foes, from hidden entrances,
In furious eddies overwhelming us,
Unarmed, and unawares, carousing ; death
Striking all round ; despair our discipline ;
And their repulse purchased by half our lives.

JOVIAN.

Death would have been the portion of the whole,
And none but I left to recount your fate,
Had I not hastened from the pinnacle,
Where love instructed me to interpose
The only means that could have saved you all.

VALENTINE.

The Emperor is wounded mortally ;
The Prince is missing, feared to have deserted ;
The Duke survives ; and, in the Emperor's stead,

Commanded with consummate skill and courage.
But where is your Egeria? Where's the Princess?

JOVIAN.

Taught all the secret of your straight, I left her,
And hastened to the rescue. She soon followed;
And afterwards I saw her in the throng,
Forlorn, dishevelled, almost trampled down,
By the rough multitude that surged along;
Her cries unheeded, or the brutal sport
Of cut-throat soldiery; her steadfast slave,
The muscular and omnipresent dwarf,
Watching to snatch her from the jeopardy,
Locked her at last within his bony gripe,
And bore her, as by magic, out of sight.
Her's is the lesson of unbridled love:
When chary maidens leave their chaste abodes
To venture forth where we men-monsters roam,
Sorrow and shame requite them evermore.

VALENTINE.

You swore, I may suppose, the usual oaths,
Before you broke them thus. I pity her.

JOVIAN.

Pity's a most unmilitary thing,
And lovers' fragrant vows not made to last.
Amours are pleasant episodes, that's all,
In the main Epic of a soldier's life.
My stars have promised fortunes something more
Than such as may be found in maidens' laps:
The diadem that dazzles all the world,
From Julian's brow descends on Jovian's.

VALENTINE.

And thence to Valentine's, is the prediction.

JOVIAN.

Let me come first, I care not who succeeds.

VALENTINE.

I have no faith in prophecies ; yet, sooth,
 The Emperor's have been verified most marvellously :
 Slain by a poisoned arrow, by a prince,
 Dying victorious, in a distant land.

JOVIAN.

And with the river Tigris on his back ;
 Fail not to reckon that among the bodings.
 Should I, then, darling presages despise,
 Or barter them for such a toy as love ?
 No : Let us hasten to the Emperor's couch,
 As faithful followers and good subjects should ;
 For if our sovereign languishes to die,
 Prætorian leaders should be at their posts
 In case the Empire needs an Emperor.

VALENTINE.

Orders are issued to evacuate
 This den of carnage, and to seek abroad
 Less sanguinary fields. Retreat and fear
 Already drive us from this eminence,
 Where late our master lighted, surveying
 Worlds at his feet to make his own by conquest.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE—*The Tombs beneath the Palaces.* ESTHER's
cenotaph of marble raised above the ground of the
crypt. The entrance by steps in front descending.
ZOPYRUS, wounded and insensible, lying beside the
cenotaph. Enter ESTHER, ascending from it.

ESTHER.

The dawning morning animates e'en these
 Cold mansions of the dead, and light and joy
 Are now abroad on universal nature.
 But not for Esther shines the cheerful dawn,
 Shrouded within this charnel house, where Death,

With all his gloomy monuments around,
Yet comes not, though implored, to my relief.
And ah! devotion soothes not as 't was wont.
The sighs of penitence exhaled in prayer
Would shed the balm of peace upon my soul;
And these drear dwellings seen through pious tears
Were lighted with the radiance of those hopes
Which mellow the dark prospect of the grave.
Merciful Heaven, what a night the last!
Is there no place of refuge where the heart
May be made humbly emulous of death?
Not even this sepulture free from strife?
But conflict, havoc, wounds and homicide,
Defiling this deep-hidden sanctuary,
The shouts and implements of flagrant war,
With dead and dying cumbering the ground
To desecrate the temple of the buried.
Hark! what heart-rending groan was that!
Alas, it must be some expiring wretch.

ZOPYRUS (*reviving, but delirious*).

Perdition to thee, Julian! Follow me,
Brave Persians, sons of fire, your Prince is foremost!
Roman, away to France or Italy,
From barbarous Frank or freeborn German pluck
The iron chaplet of gore-drenched renown—
The faithful of our Eastern continent
Defy the yoke of overreaching Rome,
And die delighted in their golden chains! (*he swoons.*)

ESTHER.

Warrior, revive! let me unloose your helm,
And fan you with the fragrance of the morn;
Alas! 'tis all the succour I can give.

ZOPYRUS.

Avaunt! disarm me not, nor touch my helm—
No—armed from crest to spur, let me expire,

Covered with glorious wounds, a soldier's death.
Art thou a Persian or a Roman? Speak!

ESTHER.

A Persian.

ZOPYRUS.

Swear to it.

ESTHER.

I swear.

ZOPYRUS.

And I:

Now we are sworn to fellowship, attend—
Listen to what I breathe my last to tell:
Betrayed by an enamoured castaway,
False as her father to his country's cause—
We were defeated; but I die content;
For Julian is no more; my country's saved.
Now, comrade, mark my dying testament:
When I expire, let not my body fall
A trophy into Rome's insulting power.

ESTHER.

It shall not.

ZOPYRUS.

Swear to that again.

ESTHER.

I swear.

ZOPYRUS.

Thanks, fervent thanks—and now a last farewell.
Take from my hand—but not till I am gone—
The sword which now it grasps, reeking with blood,
Firm in the sharpest agonies of death,
And bear it with this message to the king:
Tell him that though the sword of Cyrus failed,
Yet I struck Julian with a poisoned arrow;
And armed with consecrated sword and bow,
Invoking benedictions on his country,

Calamities and curses on its foes,
A singlehearted patriot, as he lived,
Fearless and true, Prince Zopyrus expired.

ESTHER.

Just Heaven! Zopyrus! Speak, art thou?

ZOPYRUS.

I was—— (*he dies in her arms*).

ESTHER.

He is no more—yet live, my son, dear son—
Nay, glare not on thy mother with those eyes
Fixed and petrific; clench not thus my hand;
Oh! speak, it is a frantic mother calls,
To whom thy voice were hymn of cherubim.
His limbs are motionless, he breathes no more,
He is gone before me from this mourning world;
Ev'n at his mother's grave he died, my Zopyrus,
His precious bloodshed all around it spilt.
It is not, cannot, shall not be, not dead!
My beautiful, incomparable son,
My only son, for whom a mother's prayers,
Nor day nor night ceased to be offered up!
Thou noblest scion of a blasted stock,
And art thou gone? Shall I ne'er feel thy smile,
Nor rest thy head on this distracted breast,
The constant pillow of thy infant sleep,
And fountain of thy dawning being? Speak!
Oh! let me warm thee back to life again
With this embrace, or let us die together.
See! what a gash upon his manly brow,
And here another:—Who has murdered him?
Ah! is it thus alone we meet, my son,
Thy lifeless body mangled thus, the first
And last that I shall ever know of thee!

(*She throws herself on the body of ZOPYRUS*).

Enter SOPHIA, supported by ISHMAEL.

SOPHIA.

I can proceed no farther, let me die :
Here lay me down among the heaps of slain,
And let my life and sufferings end together.

ISHMAEL.

Your drooping spirit still with courage arm,
And haste yet further out of reach of harm ;
Here it is perilous to rest—yet fly ;
Should you halt here, we both together die.

SOPHIA.

Flee where I may, can I escape despair,
Or hide from shame but in an unknown grave ?

ISHMAEL.

Provoked they come, like wounded elephants
Pursuing their betrayers in these haunts.

SOPHIA.

Ah ! if perfidious Jovian be their leader,
Flushed with ungenerous conquest, let him come,
And die his footsteps in Sophia's blood !

(She sinks down near the grave of ESTHER.)

ESTHER.

Methought I heard another voice of wo,
Wailing another broken heart : Who weeps ?
This is the house of mourning ;—welcome to it !

ISHMAEL.

Madam, your truant servant, come at last.

ESTHER.

Ah ! Ishmael, since thy visit hither, dreadful
Has been the interruption of my peace.
Look here, old man, you, who have loved us all,
Behold this ruin of our race and hopes,
My son, a prince, in deed, as much as blood ;
Torn from whose sight, I knew not but through you,

K

Till he came here and died upon my grave.
His latest breath I gathered here : Oh ! Ishmael,
Behold his mangled, lifeless, cold remains—
Cut off just in the flower of towering youth !
Thy country's champion and thy people's pride !
Plumed with authority, her foremost soldier !
Now cold as the cold earth, my Zopyrus,
None but thy mother ev'n to bury thee !

ISHMAEL.

When cloven down his grandsire sunk to rest,
He died upon the cushion of my breast ;
When cloven down by an inhuman stroke,
Unnatural chance and impulse of the yoke
His father bears, I stood the son beside,
Watching the ebb of life's retreating tide,
Till summoned to the rescue of another,
Brought to expire near her immortal brother.

ESTHER.

Amazement ! This my daughter, too, thus come
To die with me ? We will all die together.

SOPHIA.

Art thou the tree whose evil fruit I am ?
Oh, no ! I have no mother ; she expired
Before I wrung her heart with shame for me :
I never knew a mother's tender care.

ESTHER.

Yes, child of sorrow, welcome to my home,
To weep with Esther the disconsolate,
Who mourns her son, and is not to be comforted.
Dear unknown daughter, thou shalt share the rites
Belonging to thy brother's obsequies :
'T is our last duty e're we follow him.
With the rich spices of the balsamed East
We will embalm him for the grave's repose,
Resplendent in his armour, as he died,

In soldierly distinction, high enshrined,
While at his feet, like willows branching down,
His mother and his sister, steeped in tears,
Will bend and weep, rooted for ever there.

ISHMAEL.

Again I hear the shout, of battle and of route,
And haste to bear a pall, at Julian's funeral.

[*Exit.*

Enter HORMISDAS.

HORMISDAS.

Faint and bewildered, whither shall I turn?

ESTHER.

That voice! That form! Can I mistake them? No.

HORMISDAS.

Led by pursuit too far—pursuit of whom?
My slaughtered countrymen, my family.
Degenerate son, unworthy of my sires
Resting within these sacred tabernacles,
I wander in their labyrinths astray.

ESTHER.

My lord, my love, my prince, Hormisdas! Ah! (*swoons.*)

HORMISDAS.

What shriek was that! A female at my feet!
Almighty powers shield me! What is this?
What art thou, haggard spectre? In thine eye
So lustreless, thy ghastly lineaments,
That livid cheek, and squalid wretchedness,
Do I behold what once was Esther? No—
Esther, a star of loveliness, that shone
Inimitably fair and beautiful,
Who died of grief.

ESTHER.

Is this eternity?

HORMISDAS.

She speaks—'t is she—

ESTHER.

And have I left at last
That world of misery!—Where am I now?

HORMISDAS.

The sweet recorder of her well known voice,
I recollect its symphony, as when
It soothed and wooed me:—Esther, speak to me!

ESTHER.

The Prince, our daughter, and our much loved son,
Have come to join me here, beyond the grave:—
But where are we? And what? Among the damned?
Whose diabolic orgies riot here,
The transient pleasures of indulgent life,
To expiate in torments—for eternity—
Innocent children with their guilty parents,
Ev'n in the second generation punished!

HORMISDAS.

Is this not she? Oh! speak to me, who once
Was Esther, whom the Prince Hormisdas loved!

ESTHER.

The mother of their son, untimely slain,
Dear Zopyrus, thy mother's only pride;
Nay, sons are fathers' pride, their mothers' joy,
Our pure, unspeakable, unselfish love:
Knew ye that youth?—he is no more.

HORMISDAS.

Not dead!

ESTHER.

Upon my tomb he died, slain.

HORMISDAS.

Slain!

ESTHER.

Divorced from a bad world and buried deep—

Dead to all things but prayer and penitence,
Through the long tract of sixteen cloistered years,
Mourning Hormisdas gone, our children lost,
Here have I languished—till they all have come,
Like my poor Zopyrus, to die with me.

HORMISDAS.

What if his father be his murderer?
Lust and sedition, treason and revenge,
These are your wages here—and what hereafter?
Are there more tortures for your victim yet?
Mad and beyond it I am all convulsed;
There is upon my brain a fell despair,
That paralyses me with awful consciousness.

ESTHER.

Here lies the body of our son.

HORMISDAS.

Where?

ESTHER.

Here,

All festering in his gore.

HORMISDAS.

Give me to see it,
Come, show it to his abject conqueror.

Enter ISHMAEL.

ISHMAEL.

Master! haste to your master's aid;
Beleaguered, sore pressed and waylaid,
Disastered Julian lowers his crest,
While hidden terrors rack his rest:—
Persia's archers, Persia's horse,
Strike panic, havoc, through his force—
Execrations brand your name,
As author of the Roman shame.

HORMISDAS.

Hah ! double traitor !—perfidy to both !
False both to Rome and Persia—cursed by all—
That calumny shall be washed out in blood.

ISHMAEL.

The battle rages, Persia wins the day,
Would you participate—haste, haste away,
And speed in time of need, to join the fray.

HORMISDAS.

Lead on then ; show me to the field where fate
Attends me, for I see a gleam of hope
That I may die—cleansed of at least one stain :
If thou art Esther, that beloved one,
Whom once I left the world for——

ESTHER.

I am she :

And wilt thou leave me thus ? You must not go.

HORMISDAS.

My reputation calls me forth ; farewell !
All ties are vain against the appeal of honour.

ESTHER.

Oh ! by our former fondness I implore,
By the dear pledges of our early love,
By our misfortunes—by this interview—
Teeming with undivulged mysteries—
Yet stay with us, go not again to bloodshed,
My long-lost—husband, may I call thee ? stay,
Stay with our children, in this burial place :
Thy constant Esther, on her bended knees,
Entreats her well-beloved to remain.

HORMISDAS.

You plead in vain against stern honour's call,
Which stirs within me, and inflames my blood :
My frozen faculties are all on fire,
My heart beats high, my nerves are steeled, I go

To die for the salvation of my honour :
Farewell to all but that—country, and family,
And life, and all—I immolate you all,
Victims upon the altar of my honour.

[*Exeunt* **HORMISDAS** and **ISHMAEL**.]

ESTHER.

Fell and false honour, whose malignant influence
Religion, loyalty, domestic love,
All that is godlike in humanity
Exacts ; terrific holocausts, consumed
Upon thy selfish, sanguinary shrine !
Forsaken Esther, seek the grave once more,
Where only the tumultuous passions rest,
And all the heavy laden find repose :
Thou hast no kindred but the worm that dies not :
He who has cast thee sternly from his side,
He who upon thy bosom came and died,
She who unminded at thy feet expires—
These, once, were to thee all the heart desires—
Thy flesh and blood—But, recollect thy vow,
Thy family are strangers to thee now !
Buried alive and to devotion given,
All else is vanity, that alone is Heaven !
(*ESTHER goes down into her tomb, leaving ZOPY-
RUS, dead, on one side, SOPHIA, dying, on the
other*).

ACT V.

SCENE—*The plain in front of the Palaces (as at the beginning of the third act)—Ctesiphon at a distance. Enter JULIAN, on a litter borne by soldiers, attended by CHEOPS and THERSITES—ISHMAEL following, apart. Alarums—Excursions—Music and tumult of battle.*

JULIAN.

Here set me down, and let me rest a while.

CHEOPS.

The battle rages dreadfully.

THERSITES.

'T is frightful.

CHEOPS.

Never, in fifty years' experience,
Have I been witness of so fierce a conflict.

THERSITES.

The Emperor can not survive much longer :
He will not see his army decimated.

CHEOPS.

His lamp of life glimmers with parting blaze ;
Still, with a hero's courage, he surveys
Scenes that dismay the stoutest soldier's heart,
And to the last performs his master-part.

ISHMAEL (*aside*).

The conqueror of yesterday
Already to remorse a prey,
Feeds on ashes wet with tears—
Vainglory quenched in torturing fears,
Which, though stifled, wring his heart—
He quails, death brandishing his dart !

THERSITES.

Mighty magician, save us!—all is lost.

CHEOPS.

Be of good cheer, hope is not yet extinct.

THERSITES.

Ebony monster, of the crisping locks,
Master of Abyssinia's magic arts,
Thou man of Cush and dæmon's minister,
Is necromancy then without a spell
To rescue us? Must yon ferocious foe
That circumvents us, batten on our blood?

CHEOPS.

Offspring of courtesan, and brothel-born,
Thou scum of luxury and soldier's shame,
Why loiter here, importunate? Away!
Bare thy right arm for action—to the field!

THERSITES.

Forsake my wounded sovereign! Not I.

CHEOPS.

Serve him by grappling with his enemies:
Go, quell thy recreant fears with sword in hand!

THERSITES.

This is thy magic circle, where 't is safe
To stay; I will abide with thee, my friend.

CHEOPS.

My skill, alas, is unavailing now.

THERSITES.

And was so ever, rank impostor!

CHEOPS.

How?

What says the knave, whose foul licentious tongue
Is bold and striking as his sword is harmless?

THERSITES.

I say, the Emperor, lingering on that couch,
Beleaguered by innumerable foes,

L

Rabid to tear us all to pieces, sirrah,
Was by thy false alluring wiles seduced,
To venture hither out of reach of help.

CHEOPS.

Thou liest, Bœotian coward, 't was not I,
But his inordinate ambition.

THERSITES.

What !

Dar'st thou traduce the Emperor of Rome !
I'll have thee bowstrung, traitor.

CHEOPS.

Silence ! slave.

ISHMAEL (*aside*).

Feast, ravished ears, and gloat, delighted eyes,
On Julian's death-bed fears—on Julian's bitter sighs !
A caitiff Grecian and a Libyan knave,
His sole attendants to the yawning grave,
With ribald quarrels and inhuman sport—
The remnant of the pageant of his court.

THERSITES.

Methought I heard a shout of victory ;
Hark ! 'T is the enemy—the guards are routed.

JULIAN.

What said'st thou ?

THERSITES.

The imperial guard is broken,
And flies before the Persian cavalry.

ISHMAEL (*aside*).

The towering eagle, straining high,
Daring the sun with sparkling eye,
Falls stricken in the wilderness,
With none to succour his distress.

JULIAN.

My guard give way ! Then all is lost indeed.

Enter SALLUST and JOVIAN, with Soldiers.

JOVIAN.

They fly, on every side.

JULIAN.

Who fly ?

JOVIAN.

The enemy.

JULIAN.

Thank Heaven !

JOVIAN.

Sire, the guards fled.

JULIAN.

Impossible !

JOVIAN.

In vain I strove to stop and rally them ;
Routed, dismayed, they threw their eagles down,
Endeared and sanctified by all our battles,
Which never saw a Roman eagle vailed—
Whole cohorts, panic struck, confounded fled,
Borne down by clouds of archers and of horse—
Fled, and were slaughtered as they routed ran.
The day was lost—but for a noble charge
Which Sallust headed with the Christian troops.
The Persian tumult, rampant with success,
Was overthrown and driven from the field,
By his resistless onset strewed with slain.
Broken and beaten by him, they have gone :
While, covered by his sure and steady wing,
The guards were gathered from disgraceful flight.

JULIAN.

Thanks, from the heart, my Gallilean friend—
Thou art the frequent saviour of the State.

SALLUST.

How fares it with our gracious sovereign ?

JULIAN.

Why, well: How should it fare but well?
Surrounded by the loyal brave, I lie
Within the temple victory has raised
Upon the field of battle, and foretaste
The pleasures of a posthumous renown.

Enter VALENTINE, with Soldiers.

VALENTINE.

Good tidings, Sire! the victory is yours:
Attacked in front by tribes of cavalry,
In flank annoyed by troops of elephants,
Our men, intimidated, yielded ground;
Defeat was imminent—had not the Prince——

JULIAN.

The Prince, then, lives?

VALENTINE.

Rome's most intrepid champion——

JULIAN.

Most grateful tidings! Let me see him, quick;
Time presses with me.

VALENTINE.

See, he comes, my lord.

Enter HORMISDAS, wounded.

HORMISDAS.

Victory! Victory! Great Emperor!

JULIAN.

Welcome, my faithful friend—come to my arms!
Rome shall acknowledge your fidelity
With all the honours empires can bestow
On constant patriots and faithful subjects.

HORMISDAS.

Yes, I am proud of this—'t is my last boast;
Just in the crisis of the army's fate,

Upon my peerless charger, breathing fire—
As the Sirocco sweeps o'er seas of sand,
Or fierce Euroclydon subdues the waves,
Destroying all resistance—I arrived,
And plunged into the elements of battle.
Wherever danger was, this falchion streamed
Like forked lightning in the thick obscure,
Till, by the bright example, Romans, roused
From dastard fear's unmanning influence,
Did prodigies of valour on my countrymen—
Slaughtered, discomfited, who fled before us.
My gallant horse, pierced with a thousand wounds,
Bowed his proud neck, till then in thunder clothed,
And fell, as I shall fall, in foreign harness,
True to his master to the last—to death.

JULIAN.

Now 's the accepted time for me to die :
And oh ! how glorious to expire a conqueror,
Ere age or weakness, dagger or disease
Inflict their ravages on poor mortality.
Who is it that would cling to life ? I've lived
For fame, not pleasure,—for renown, not ease,—
Studying life's noblest lesson—how to die,
Earning its richest heritage—renown.
Grateful and glorious I depart. Farewell—
Companions of my toils and victories, adieu.
Serene and brilliant, as autumnal sunset
After a short but profitable day,
I leave my radiance to adorn the world.

(JULIAN *draws the arrow from his side, and dies.*)

HORMISDAS.

Not long before thy slave : To kingdoms born,
By wounded pride—which who can bear ?—dislodged
From my bright birthright's orbit, and condemned
Eccentric honour's errors to abide.

I would have fallen in the thick of battle,
But Cato's noble Roman death be mine—
Old Ishmael, do thine office, the last proof
Of thy fidelity and mine. Farewell !

(ISHMAEL, *with averted countenance, holds HORMIS-*
DAS's sword, who falls on it at JULIAN's feet.)

Thou hast obeyed thy master's last command,
Whose wasted strength sufficed for suicide.
Witness, ye Romans all, I die a Roman :
Wherever native, and however wronged,
Death puts the seal of constancy upon me. (*Dies.*)

ISHMAEL.

The pelican defiles its nest
With blood torn from the breast,
And nurtures its young brood
To treachery and blood.

SOLDIERS.

Duke Sallust chosen Emperor—Shield him, shield !
(*The army spread their shields, and proceed to raise*
SALLUST on them, as elected Emperor.)

SALLUST.

No, soldiers : I decline the Roman Empire :—
Life's remnant I devote to higher duties.

SOLDIERS.

None but a Gallilean for the purple !

SALLUST.

Nay, comrades, I am fixed immoveably.
I too have been enthusiast in war,
And rioted in victory's intoxication :
But I have learned to shudder at the madness
Which goads mankind to gild a barbarous strife,
Appropriate only to a savage state,
With the allurements of misguided glory.
The scythe of time destroys enough. Man need not
Usurp the attribute of his Creator,

But rather live in peace and love on earth,
The transient being of our pilgrimage.

SOLDIERS.

Let us elect Count Jovian, then. Count Jovian,
Shield him ! Brave Jovian, Captain of the Guard !

*(The soldiers make the platform of their shields,
and raise JOVIAN on it.)*

JOVIAN.

Unworthy as I am, yet to decline
Were unbecoming as to court this honour.
With deep humility I then submit
To undertake the Empire you confer,
Brave conquerors and suffragans of thrones ;
And my first act of sovereignty proclaims
Peace, and the end of this severe campaign.

SOLDIERS.

Peace ! no more war ! Huzza for Jovian's reign !
Lead us to triumph, Cæsar,—lead us home !
Huzza for Jovian, Emperor of Rome !

*(The scene closes, with JOVIAN uplifted, on the soldiers' shields, JULIAN extended on the litter,
HORMISDAS at his feet.)*

THE END.



